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July 2, 2018

VIA ECFS

Marlene Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Notice of *Ex Parte* Presentation, *Petition of USTelecom for Forbearance Pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 160(c)*, WC Docket No. 18-141

Dear Ms. Dortch,

On June 28, 2018, Daniel P. Friesen, Co-Founder of IdeaTek Telecom; Dane Jasper, CEO of Sonic Telecommunications; Carson Coffman, President/COO of Socket Telecom; Brian Worthen, CEO of Mammoth Networks; Margi Shaw, CEO of First Communications; John Hoehne and Joel Miller, COO and General Counsel of Access One, respectively; and, Chip Pickering, CEO, and the undersigned from INCOMPAS met with Commissioner O’Rielly and Amy Bender.

In the meeting, the companies discussed their competitive service offerings and deployment of fiber networks. Together, these companies are providing innovative broadband service to anchor institutions, public charities, first responders, government entities, small businesses, and residential consumers. A number of them are serving rural areas where there is no other broadband provider (or only one other provider) and bringing high-paying, skilled jobs to these rural communities. They also have a presence in urban areas (including the many underserved urban areas) where they provide more cost effective, customized, and innovative services than those offered by the incumbent and cable companies (where present). They pointed out that once they enter a market, the incumbent often responds with the deployment of fiber or a more innovative offering, demonstrating the impact competition has on catalyzing prompt broadband deployment. Indeed, when the incumbent retires the copper and deploys fiber the incumbent no longer has an obligation to provide access to the unbundled bare copper loop (*i.e.*, DSO)—meaning they already have a productive means to escape this obligation without forbearance and the ensuing disruption of critical markets.

These companies emphasized that continued access to unbundled network elements is crucial to their ability to continue to provide, and expand, these vital services in the communities they serve. The fiber builders explained how they leverage unbundled network elements in key places while they are entering a market and building out their fiber networks. They also noted

that they still face significant barriers to entry in a number of locations. Some also discussed that if they experience significant price increases, similar to those they faced as a result of the Commission's decision related to business data services, it could eliminate their ability to provide critical services such as competitive local PRI service.

The executives of these small businesses are part of the communities they serve and are passionate about bridging the digital divide and bringing more innovative services in all areas. Consistent with the Commission's goal of expanding broadband deployment and ensuring a competitive market, the Commission should dismiss USTelecom's petition outright and focus, first, on removing existing barriers to deployment and reject USTelecom's attempt to cut off much needed competitive fiber deployment and competition for consumers.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Karen Reidy

Karen Reidy
Vice President, Regulatory

cc: Commissioner O'Rielly
Amy Bender